

## Message Text

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EXDIS, NO FOREIGN DISSEM, CONTROLLED DISSEM, TOSEC 189

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1,2

TAGS:ET, PFOR, PINT

SUBJECT: INR ASSESSMENT OF ETHIOPIAN SITUATION

1. FOLLOWING IS INR'S TENTATIVE ASSESSMENT OF JUNE 28-29

MILITARY ACTIONS AGAINST ENDALKATCHEW GOVERNMENT.

ASSESSMENT IS BASED ON FRAGMENTARY INFORMATION AVAILABLE

AS OF 1600 EDT, JUNE 29.

2. SINCE INSTALLATION OF ENDALKATCHEW CABINET IN MARCH 1974, MILITARY REFORMERS (OFFICERS AND ENLISTED MEN) HAVE MONITORED CABINET'S MOVES TOWARD REFORMS DEMANDED AT THE TIME OF FEBRUARY MUTINIES--DEMANDS IN WHICH MILITARY WERE JOINED BY OTHER SEGMENTS OF ETHIOPIAN SOCIETY BOTH FOR ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL REASONS. NOT ONLY HAS CABINET BEEN UNABLE OR UNWILLING TO IMPLEMENT SPEEDY REFORMS, BUT FOOT-DRAGGING HAS BEEN ENCOURAGED BY CONSERVATIVE Factions WHICH WANTED RETURN TO STATUS QUO ANTE BUT WITH EMPEROR REMAINING IN FIGUREHEAD ROLE.

3. WHILE MILITARY HAS BEEN IN POSITION OF MONITORING CABINET ACTIVITIES, IT HAS SHOWN GREAT RELUCTANCE TO

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TAKE OVER GOVERNMENT, SINCE IT IS NOT UNIFIED IN

ITS POLITICAL IDEAS AND CANNOT COUNT ON SUPPORT FROM ALL UNITS. THIS STILL APPEARS TO BE THE CASE, AND THE MILITARY EVIDENTLY STILL PREFERENCES TO OPERATE THROUGH PRESSURE ON ENDALKATCHEW, BUT IT IS ALSO ANXIOUS TO HEAL

ITS INTERNAL DIVISIONS AND RESTORE CHAIN OF COMMAND.

4. REFORMISTS HAVE DEMANDED, AMONG OTHER THINGS, THAT 25 OFFICIALS OF FORMER GOVERNMENT WHO HAVE BEEN IN MILITARY CUSTODY SINCE MARCH BE TRIED FOR CORRUPTION. CONSERVATIVE MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT ON JUNE 27 SOUGHT TO PERSUADE TROOPS OF FOURTH DIVISION (WHICH TOGETHER WITH FIRST DIVISION IS STATIONED IN ADDIS ABABA) TO RELEASE THESE MEN.

5. THIS MOVE WAS APPARENTLY MAJOR IMPETUS FOR JUNE 28-29 RESURGENCE OF ACTIVITY OF MILITARY REFORMIST COMMITTEES (INCLUDING REPRESENTATIVES OF ARMY, AIR FORCE, NAVY, POLICE, AND TERRITORIAL ARMY) WHICH HAVE BEEN SEEKING COMMON GROUND TO PRESS REFORM IN THE FACE OF CONSERVATIVE UNDERCUTTING EFFORTS. COMMITTEES ANNOUNCED OVER RADIO AND TV STATIONS TAKENOVER BY MILITARY THAT THEIR ACTIONS DIRECTED TO FINDING SOLUTION TO PROBLEMS OF WHOLE COUNTRY."

6. ACCORDING TO FIRST ACCOUNTS, ENDALKATCHEW WAS ARRESTED. HOWEVER, MORE RECENT INFORMATION INDICATES THAT HE APPARENTLY REMAINS IN OFFICE AND REPORTEDLY HAS APPOINTED FOUR-MAN CABINET COMMITTEE TO TALK WITH ARMED FORCES REPRESENTATIVES. EFFECT OF THIS MAY BE THAT FOUR-MAN COMMITTEE WILL BECOME CONDUIT FOR MILITARY'S GENERAL GUIDANCE OR SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS TO ENDALKATCHEW.

7. ADDITIONAL THREAT OVER ENDALKATCHEW APPEARS TO BE EXISTENCE OF "ARREST LIST" WHICH INCLUDES IMPORTANT CABINET MINISTERS SUCH AS MIN DEF ABIYE AND POSSIBLY ENDALKATCHEW HIMSELF, WHO COULD JOIN 25 ALREADY IN CUSTODY IF THEY FAIL TO MEET MILITARY DEMANDS. NO RELIABLE INFORMATION AVAILABLE AS TO WHETHER ANY NEW ARRESTS MADE.

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8. MILITARY'S PROTESTATIONS OF LOYALTY TO EMPEROR APPEAR ESSENTIALLY IRRELEVANT TO ENDALKATCHEW-VS.- MILITARY POWER STRUGGLE. ALL ETHIOPIAN FACTIONS EXCEPT FAR-LEFT RADICALS PROFESS LOYALTY TO EMPEROR AS CONSTITUTIONAL MONARCH.

9. ABOVE ASSESSMENT IS HIGHLY TENTATIVE, AND IMPORTANT

INFORMATION GAPS REMAIN, INCLUDING FOLLOWING:

-(A) ALTHOUGH MILITARY APPEAR TO BE SPEAKING WITH ONE VOICE, WE ARE NOT REPEAT NOT AWARE OF IDENTITY OF PRIME MOVERS. THEY SEEM TO BE "MODERATE" AS OPPOSED TO

"RADICAL," AND THEIR ACTIONS SEEM TO BE AGAINST FOOT-DRAGGING OF OLD GUARD.

-(B) ACTIVITIES OF IMPORTANT CONSERVATIVES, ESPECIALLY RAS ASRATE KASSA, CHAIRMAN OF CROWN COUNCIL, ARE UNREPORTED.

10. ACTION SEEMS TO BE ALMOST ENTIRELY IN ADDIS ABABA OR IN AIR FORCE HQ IN DEBRA ZEIT (20 MILES SOUTH OF CAPITAL). THERE IS NO INDICATION THAT ELEMENTS OF THIRD DIVISION (WHICH GUARDS OGADEN AGAINST SOMALIA) OR SECOND DIVISION (WHICH GARRISONS ERITREA) ARE INVOLVED, BUT WE WOULD EXPECT TO PICK UP INFORMATION AS TO DEGREE OF COORDINATION, IF ANY, AMONG THESE ELEMENTS IN DUE COURSE. WE BELIEVE THERE IS STILL CONSIDERABLE DANGER THAT FIGHTING AMONG MILITARY FACTIONS COULD BREAK OUT.

11. ADDIS ABABA AND ASMARA ARE REPORTED CALM.

12. NO SOMALI OR ERITREAN LIBERATION FRONT REACTIONS TO PRESENT CONFUSING EVENTS YET NOTED, BUT ACTION TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF ETHIOPIAN DISARRAY CANNOT BE EXCLUDED.

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